

BEYOND BARRIERS

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3

SIKESTON REGIONAL CENTER

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Sharing The Vision

Sixteen-year-old Gavin Flentge has a vision...and a mission. He has chosen as his Eagle Scout project, to build an accessible playground where children of all abilities can play together.

Some time ago, Gavin noticed that Perryville City Park didn't have a play area that was accessible to children with disabilities. His cousin, Logan, who is nine years old, uses a wheelchair to get around...and it bothered Gavin that she wasn't able to play in the park with other children. This provided the inspiration for his Eagle project, which he hopes to complete by mid summer of 2004.

Meeting with the park director was the first order of business for Gavin, followed by his presentation to the Board of Aldermen and City Council for final approval. The next step for Gavin was the most difficult part of the project to date. He had to prepare a detailed written proposal outlining the entire project from start to finish. This ten-page proposal was submitted to the Eagle Board of Review and approved.

Meanwhile, through the father of another boy scout, Gavin was invited to visit and tour the Little Tykes manufacturing plant in Farmington. There he met with administrators who were impressed with his plan and volunteered to work with him on acquiring the desired playground equipment.

Tom Flentge, Gavin's father, said it best. "Sometimes people don't realize how the community will get behind a worthwhile endeavor and really support it." As the community rallied to the challenge, Gavin's vision grew. What started out as a vision of a wheelchair swing and maybe one other piece of equipment, has snowballed into an accessible playground design that will require almost an acre of ground! There will be

an octagonal courtyard with an eight-foot wide concrete sidewalk. Six play areas can be accessed from this courtyard, and in the middle of it will be a landscaped area with a flag in the center bordered by benches.

Gavin has already logged 300 to 400 hours on his project. He says the cost will be at least \$20,000.00, and he is half-way there!

Two of the play areas have corporate sponsors, and two community barbecues have raised about \$4,000.00 more. Radio station K103 has donated air time for fundraisers. Community groups and individuals have contributed cash and materials. Gavin estimates that at least 75% of the labor to build the playground will be volunteered by other boy scouts, community members, and professionals who work for various contractors. The local Wal-Mart store has also submitted a grant proposal to the national home office. "If we end up with more money," says Gavin,

"we'll just build it bigger and better."

When asked what part of the project has been the most rewarding so far, Gavin quickly responded, "Getting to meet lots of people!"

This story is not just about how and why to build an accessible park. It's not just about a dynamic young man with a vision. The real story here is what can happen when a caring community opens its heart and shares that vision.

By this time next year, if you happen by the Perryville City Park, you just might see Logan and all her friends playing together in the giant caterpillar, or flying through the air on swings, or laughing as they explore the huge fire engine, or even learning something new as they enjoy the big tic-tac-toe or math tiles. If so, stop and join them. This park is for everyone!

- - Candy Lane, Community Resource Coordinator



(Anyone can donate to the playground fund by sending a contribution to the Handicapped Accessible Play Area Project, c/o Gavin Flentge, Eagle Scout Project, 10 Country Lake Drive, Perryville, MO 63775.)

Designing and Planning a Play Area: How-to's and guides and equipment ideas available for making a play area accessible. www.playdesigns.com

Accessible Community Playgrounds: Help your own community design and build an accessible playground. Site includes build-it-yourself tips and 10 steps to safer play. www.kaboom.org

Boundless Playgrounds: All children can grow and play together is the theme for this nonprofit, Boundless Playgrounds, which offers communities/committees technical expertise and guidance through every stage of development, fundraising, and public awareness. No charge for services. All children benefit from universally accessible and developmentally appropriate playgrounds. www.boundlessplaygrounds.org

Nothing is impossible; there are ways that lead to everything, and if we had sufficient will, we should always have sufficient means. It is often merely for an excuse that we say things are impossible.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Almost all children have times when their behavior veers out of control. At other times, they may drift as if in a daydream, failing to pay attention or finish what they start. For some children, these kinds of behaviors are more than an occasional problem. Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have behavior problems that are so frequent and severe that they interfere with their ability to live normal lives.

These children often have trouble getting along with other children. Those who have trouble paying attention usually have trouble learning. An impulsive nature may put them in actual physical danger. Because children with ADHD have difficulty controlling this behavior, they may be labeled "bad kids" or "space cadets."

Left untreated, more severe forms of ADHD can lead to serious, lifelong problems such as poor grades in school, run-ins with the law, failed relationships, and the inability to keep a job.

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

ADHD is a condition of the brain that makes it difficult for children to control their behavior. It is one of the most common conditions of childhood, affecting 4% to 12% of school-aged children. About 3 times more boys than girls are diagnosed with ADHD.

Children with ADHD may have one or more of the following behavioral symptoms: Inattentive, hyperactive and impulsive.

- **Inattentive only:** This was formerly known as Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD). Children with this form of ADHD are not overly active. Because they do not disrupt the classroom or other activities, their symptoms may not be noticed. Among girls with ADHD, this form is most common.
- **Hyperactive/Impulsive:** Children with this type of ADHD show both hyperactive and impulsive behavior, but can pay attention.
- **Combined Inattentive/Hyperactive/Impulsive:** Children with this type of ADHD show all 3 symptoms. This is the most common type of ADHD.

(Excerpt from "Understanding ADHD" produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics. To request a free copy of the complete handbook, call Candy at Sikeston Regional Center. It can be ordered at www.aap.org)

>>>>> RESOURCES FOR ADHD and OTHER LEARNING DISABILITIES <<<<<<

Online handbook for parents and professionals <http://my.execpc.com/~calliope/> Attention Deficit Disorders, Hyperactivity & Associated Disorders, by Wendy S. Coleman, M.D.

Schwab Learning: www.schwablearning.org Excellent learning disability web site! Kids can visit www.sparktop.org, their one-of-a-kind website for kids with learning difficulties.

One A.D.D. Place: www.oneaddplace.com Check out the Treasure Chest and the Library!

New Book: *ADD Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life* deals directly and exclusively with the greatest challenge that adults with ADD face...the problem of disorganization. It can be purchased through www.amazon.com, or check with Barnes and Noble.

LD Online: A leading web site on learning disabilities. Lots of information for parents and fun activities for kids with LD. You can even download free software to read contents of LD OnLine for you.

>>>>> ADHD SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST <<<<<<

Concerta is sponsoring an "I See Success" ADHD Scholarship Contest. Your child could win a \$10,000 scholarship. Age groups: 6-9, 10-13, and 14-18 yrs. You will need to complete entry form (go to www.concerta.net to find the official entry form) and write an essay about your nominee of no more than 250 words, counting all words (a, if, the, etc.). For complete rules and details, visit the web site above or write CONCERTA Scholarship Contest, PO Box 14024, Bridgeport, CT 06673-4024.

Some Famous People who have Learning Disabilities and ADHD: Terry Bradshaw, Bruce Jenner, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Tommy Hilfiger, Charles Schwab, Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Jan Leno, Henry Winkler, Harry Belafonte

Keeping Children Safe

Did You Know? Few people know that un-inflated latex balloons or fragments of popped balloons are a leading cause of choking deaths among young children. Brightly colored latex balloons attract the attention of curious children. Young children like to suck or bite on balloons. In some cases, latex fragments can be propelled into the child's mouth and throat when the balloon pops. When fragments of a popped balloon are within a child's reach, they may end up in the child's mouth and be inhaled or swallowed. When inhaled, a latex balloon fragment over the child's airway can cause suffocation. Because latex balloons are sticky, they are hard to remove, even using the Heimlich maneuver. --from the *Missouri Families* web site:
<http://missourifamilies.org>



Clue Into Safety: Here is a safety source with tons of tips from safety education organizations and links to other safety sites, too.
www.cluintosafety.com

NEWS YOU CAN USE

--Candy Lane, Community Resource Coordinator



Have you heard about **Parent Power** yet? It's the only book written for parents/guardians to guide them in choosing or evaluating a residential placement for their loved ones. To request an information packet about this book, call 888-893-82

Gun Lake Adventure books are packed with adventure and feature Johnnie Jacobson, a hero who uses a wheelchair. The series was created to introduce elementary-age children to disability-related issues in a fun and interesting way, but adults love the books, too. Cost is about \$5.99 on Amazon.com or at Barnes and Noble. Proceeds from the books go to Alternatives in Motion, a nonprofit organization that raises money to ensure qualified individuals receive the equipment their doctors have prescribed. Check it all out at www.tapshoe.com.

Sex Education for Parents of Children with Autism is a new manual released in May. It is written by Mark Steege, LMSW-ACP and Shannon Peck, MS, LPC, both of whom have a wealth of experience dealing with appropriate and inappropriate sexual behavior among individuals with developmental disabilities. Cost of the manual is \$30.00. For more information or to order, call toll free 877-560-1739.

Walgreen's Pharmacy in Cape Girardeau will be offering flu vaccines on a walk-in basis November 5th from 9 a.m. to Noon and November 15th from 6 to 9 p.m. Cost is \$20 per shot. If you have a Walgreen's in your area, you can call to see if they are participating in this program.

Wheelchair Ramps: Need information or instructions on building a wheelchair ramp? www.wheelchairramp.org offers a complete online manual covering everything from funding to layout and plans to construction costs.

PAVE is a parent-directed, non-profit organization existing to share information and resources with people whose lives are linked to children and adults with disabilities. PAVE Pipeline is a free quarterly newsletter. Learn more at www.washingtonpave.com

Pediatric Education Dietitian Services (PEDS) focuses on the nutritional needs of children and offers individualized nutrition assessment and education by registered dietitians. It is located in Ellisville, Mo. For more information, call 636-277-7337 or toll free 800-587-3515 or visit www.pedsinc.com.

Web Watch

Missouri Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities Find all the information you need, in one place. Find disability information groups, evaluators, tutors, support groups, state agencies. www.fetaweb.com



Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Log onto this web site of the Technical Assistance Center on PBIS established by the Office of Special Education Programs. You will find school wide, classroom, individual and family support sections, plus tools, links and lots more. www.pbis.org

Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities has a new web site. It includes a *Medicaid Manual* that will help self-advocates and family members understand Medicaid, a *Provider Handbook* useful to current and future providers, the *Microboard Development Workbook* and the *Show Me Change Reports*. Check it out at www.mpcdd.com.

Missouri Families is a web site sponsored by the University of Missouri Outreach and Extension. Safety tips for children, health information, money matters, healthy eating and excellent family resources abound on this site. You can also subscribe to a weekly e-Newsletter. Go to <http://missourifamilies.org>.

The Desk. Eleven years ago, Bob Heinemann learned about state bureaucracy the hard way when researching information to help care for his granddaughter. Today, he's able to click onto the nation's first web site that provides an online "road map" to critical consumer information about government-funded health services. Created by the Medicaid Reference Desk, the site is made up of advocates and consumers. www.thedesk.info

Magical Toys and Products is an online catalog of therapeutic toys and products to help children with disabilities. Visit them on the Internet at www.magicaltoys.com.

NEW ADA SYMBOLS

New and improved Disability Access Symbols are now available online. These symbols should be used on all advertising, publicity, websites, publications and signs to alert people with disabilities to access accommodations and information. To download the symbols, visit www.ada.gov/resources/das/php

People First of Missouri

On October 3, 4 & 5 People First of Missouri held their quarterly Steering Committee meeting. Elections for new statewide officers were also held at this meeting. The new officers for the next 2 years (starting Jan. 1, 2004) are:

President - Bobby O'Dell - Lebanon Chapter of MPF
Vice President - Roger Crome - Fredericktown Chapter of MPF
Secretary - Tracy DePriest - Sikeston Chapter of MPF
Treasurer - Gary Stevens - Rolla Chapter of MPF
Sergeant-at-Arms - Barry Grissom - Sikeston Chapter of MPF

CONGRATULATIONS NEW OFFICERS!!!

Planning Ahead..



Imagine this...

Mr. & Mrs. Smith had a son. They knew from the beginning he would always be their "little boy", and they would take care of him all his life because he was not like the other boys in the neighborhood. Their son had severe multiple health and developmental issues. He would never be able to take care of himself.

Now this was some years back, when the choices such families faced were to "put away" their child, or to keep them at home and do the best they could. They figured they could do just fine because they had each other, and they would always be there for him. There were a few things they did not plan on. One thing being, that even though they were totally committed to their son, and made all decisions for him, when he turned 18 he was automatically his own guardian. Of course this did not make sense! How could he sign documents? How could he decide important matters of his care? He was like a child of early toddler age in his development, and had no communication other than body language.

This is the first thing commonly overlooked in long term planning for the care

of children with special needs. Sometimes the person's needs do not limit their ability to make important decisions, but sometimes the person simply is not able.

Luckily, the Smiths had friends who helped them pursue guardianship. Ideally, a loving family member should assume this responsibility. One thing to remember though, is that this is not necessarily the answer that follows the person through his or her lifetime. When Mr. Smith became his son's guardian, he did not know he would soon have serious health issues, a devastating illness that took his life slowly over the course of a year.

During that year, Mrs. Smith had two people who needed her total care. The ordeal led her son into regression in what skills she had worked so hard to help him develop. By the time she was able to focus completely on her son again, he had become very "set in his ways" and resisted any change in routine. She did not have the strength or the heart to upset him, so his routine began to dictate hers. Still, she was dedicated to caring for her son in the only home he had ever known. She quickly

realized she needed to replace her husband as guardian.

Over time she became fearful of what would happen to him if she was not there. Her strength and health were failing, and she was getting older. What if something suddenly happened to her and her son was left alone? Who will care for him when she can't? How will the estate she leaves him be managed to his best interest? How will what she leaves him affect his benefits? Services he may need will be much harder to get if he loses his Medicaid just because of his inheritance. So much to think about, so many laws to consider, where to turn?

Now, this was not the story of any one family in particular. It was intended to make you think ahead, and consider planning for the possible twists and turns you may face. Though you cannot predict the future, you can educate yourself and plan for it. Seminars will be offered throughout our region in February to help you do just that. Check out the schedule below.

-- Royce Ann Kessel, M.A.
Service Coordinator III



How to Plan for the Financial Future of Your Child/Adult with Special Needs

Dick Butler, a financial professional from St. Louis with 20 years of experience helping families plan for the future, will be presenting free one-hour workshops in our area February 16 and 17, 2004. The workshops will address the following critical areas of concern:

- Difference between "guardianship" and a "conservatorship"
- How will your child's SSI and Medicaid Health Insurance be affected?
- The difference between a Special Needs Trust and a Living Trust

Mark Your Calendar!

Feb. 16, 2004

Ste. Genevieve: 9:30 a.m., Univ. of Mo. Extension Office, 255 Market St.

Perryville: 2:00 p.m., Perry Co. Memorial Hospital, N. West St.

Cape Girardeau: 7:00 p.m., St. Francis Hospital, Franciscan Room (go through the Lobby, past the gift shop and all the way through the cafeteria to conference area. If needed, ask for "Special Needs Planning" workshop directions.)

Feb. 17, 2004

Sikeston: 9:00 a.m., Sikeston Regional Center, 112 Plaza Drive

New Madrid: 2:00 p.m., New Madrid Nutrition Center, 925 Pinnell Lane in the Golden Age building

Portageville: 7:00 p.m., DAEOC building, 99 Skyview Rd. (this is the Southbound Outer Road on I-55)

If you cannot attend a workshop, and would like a free consultation with Mr. Butler while he is in your area, please arrange it by calling his cell phone at 314-704-5962.

Mr. Butler will be in the Poplar Bluff area on Wednesday, February 18th. Call 800-497-4214 for more information.



Learn to be a Leader in Your Community! Partners in Policymaking 2004

The Missouri Planning Council is seeking highly motivated participants for Partners in Policymaking ("Partners"). Partners is an exciting intensive leadership training program for self-advocates and parents of young children with developmental disabilities. Thirty participants will be chosen for the program. They will represent a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, geographic regions of the state and a variety of disabilities. For more information, brochures or applications, call the Missouri Planning Council at 1-800-500-7878; or call Candy or Lee at Sikeston Regional Center (1-800-497-4647 or 472-5300). Applications are due by December 5, 2003.



INCLUSION

"Inclusion." We hear the word often, particularly in environments where folks are discussing ways people with disabilities can lead full and meaningful lives. But what does it mean, exactly, and how does it happen?

Inclusion means that people are actively participating in the world around them, with all the give and take that accompanies that participation. It means that people and their contributions are valued by the group, that people feel respected and admired by other members of the group, and that all members of the group feel a special bond with each other because of shared experiences and interests. True inclusion for people with disabilities happens when folks in the group forget about the "with disabilities" part. It is simply a feeling of belonging. It can happen anywhere in any community...the community at large, civic organization and special interest "club" communities, school communities, work communities, church communities...the list of possibilities is endless.

How does it happen? It happens by taking baby steps. Steps like finding the right "fit" for a person's interests and talents. Steps like educating the "community", and finding supportive members who are willing to be creative in removing barriers so everyone can participate on an equal basis. At some point it includes the step of "letting go," and always, of course, encouragement.

The following articles are a story of inclusion. They are written by people who have watched from the sidelines, people who have been involved in removing the barriers, people who have noticed the effects of inclusion on the group at large, and people who have watched their family member blossom. This story happens to take place in a church community, but it could happen anywhere...

From the Sidelines...

I have attended church all of my life. I have gone to different denominations and different locations. I have been in small churches and in large churches. In all that time, I have seen people with disabilities attending church; yet, until a year ago, I had never seen a person with a disability **serving** in church. What a difference it has made!

Ronnie, who has Down syndrome, had been attending our church for years with his aunt. He didn't talk to others, and would keep to himself. His shyness made it difficult for others to interact with him, and few did; but Ronnie loved church and kept coming.

About a year ago, Ronnie was asked to help serve as an usher. Since that time, I have seen a remarkable change in him. Now Ronnie shakes hands with others, and makes an effort to talk to them. He is confident and outgoing. Becoming an usher in our church has helped Ronnie become a part of the church. Seeing the positive changes in Ronnie's life has been inspirational to all of us. - - *Church Member*



From a Family Member...

An angel in disguise, a blessing, God's gift. No matter how you look at it, Ronnie is a special person. I'm speaking of Ronnie Stevens, my son, a 39-year-old man with Down Syndrome. When he was born, doctors said he wouldn't be able to do anything, but we worked with him. We taught him to ride a bike and a four-wheeler. Now he even helps his dad on the farm by driving the pickup from field to field. Ronnie can learn...it just takes a little longer.

When Ronnie started church at Christ Church of the Heartland, I, as a parent, was a little amazed at how he was just another church-goer and treated just the same. He has attended different churches, but there seems to be a special connection between Pastor Zack and Ronnie. Pastor shows no favoritism and sees no disability. It's stupendous to see the feelings flow between those two!

When the church asked Ronnie to be an usher, I was so pleased that they considered him. I knew he could do it! It makes me proud to see Ronnie up in the front of the church, receiving his blessings just like everyone else. Ronnie has changed about 80% in the past year, from being a quiet person in church, to almost taking over the preaching podium! I know God is working through him, and so many people are blessed just by watching Ronnie.

God gave my husband and me this gift, and we have worked hard at trying to raise and teach Ronnie. Not many things in life come easy. It has been a challenge, but with His help and a helpful family, I couldn't have asked for anything better.

-- *Mrs. Stevens, Ronnie's mother*

From the Head Usher...

At my church, we have an usher who is differently-abled. Ronnie helps the usher team take up the offering. He attends services faithfully, and loves helping on the team. There are times when Ronnie has trouble understanding. The whole team helps when things get confused. This is the way teams work. Leaders should not be afraid to let someone with different abilities serve on a team. No one person is good at everything, so team strength comes when all members use the gifts God has given them to the best of their ability. --*Allen Friedrich*

From a Church Greeter...

Whenever I greet people at the church doors, I strive to put myself in the other person's position, to make them feel comfortable and accepted, and to treat them the way I would like to be treated. What matters to me is the person on the inside, the person God loves. When I watch Ronnie, I believe he feels accepted, comfortable and loved; and that is why he enjoys the job of ushering, and does it faithfully with all his heart. --*Jeanine Freidrich*

INCLUSION Cont...

From a Church Member...

I had a brother who was one year older than me. He had a hard time learning when he started school, so they held him back to put him in the same grade as me. Soon they said he could go no further in school, and sent him home where he helped my dad on our farm. He could take a motor apart and fix it and put it back together! My brother loved to sing when we went to church, and when he was a young man, he sang in the church choir. It was his greatest joy. It is comforting to know that Ronnie is accepted in our church, like my brother was in years past. It brings back good memories.

-- Lillian Abernathy



From the Preacher...

Hello, my name is Zack Strong, and I am Pastor of one of the greatest churches anywhere, and that is Christ Church of the Heartland in Cape Girardeau. One of the reasons this is such an awesome place, is that it touches and cares for people of all colors and all walks of life. This can range from the difference in cultures and language barriers, to the special needs in individual lives. It's our sincere desire to see everyone touched, loved, and cared for. I believe this has proven to make our church and community stronger.

We have several special need individuals who are greatly involved in our service - one being a young man named Ronnie, who has Down Syndrome, and is serving as one of our ushers. Ronnie is in his early thirties and struggles to speak. It has been a great experience for him, his family, and our church. Ronnie's over-all self-esteem has increased. He has become one of our most faithful ushers simply because of his desire to work and serve. He brings incredible joy and encouragement to all of us as we see him smile and worship the Lord. This has also made a great impact on his home life. His family has seemed to get more encouraged, and shared with us the great improvement in a lot of his every day living skills.

I'm sure this was a challenge for his parents, the first time we asked him to help. What would happen? What are the people going to think? We have had to learn a few things, and how to work with him where he is, and will continue to do so. Overall, it has been a great experience and expression of love for us all. I wish I could say that we have always been at this point, but we haven't - simply because we weren't aware of the need, or that we didn't know what to do or how to help, but we are realizing more every day.

Churches everywhere are taking on new attitudes and ideas of how to minister and to meet the needs of everyone from small group settings, aides in assisting in children's classrooms, to support groups for families. Churches are being designed more in planning for the needs and issues that arise from some of the special needs.

Maybe you're a family with a special need, or a differently-abled individual. Talk to your Pastor and church leaders about the needs, and help them understand. Help them to see the abilities. Most of us struggle simply because we do not know what to do or how to help. I'm sure that we haven't connected with all and have failed many times, but we are becoming more aware of all the wonderful people that may have some challenges, but simply want to be loved and have a place. Don't despair and give up. We, the church, are here for you.

-- Pastor Zack Strong



Ronnie with Head Usher, Allen Friedrich



Community Access

Community inclusion is difficult when the places a person wants to go are not accessible to them. We've come a long way in this country with making public places accessible, but there is still work to be done! As business entities come to realize how large the consumer base of people with disabilities is, they can no longer afford to ignore simple accommodations that will bring those consumers into their place of business. However, businesses are not always aware of all accessibility issues for every disability. Wouldn't it be nice if,

whether it's required or not, every restaurant had menus in Braille and large type? Wouldn't it be nice if all accessible hotel rooms were on the ground floor so people could get out if elevators were shut down in a disaster? Wouldn't it be nice if all accessible hotel rooms had alarm-activated vibrating beds? As illustrated in the story below, sometimes all you have to do is ask! And, there are tax incentives for some businesses that might make it more feasible for them to comply with your request. Share the information on this page with them.

Just Ask

It was November of 2001 when Wendy, my wife, was hospitalized due to pregnancy-related complications. We went into the Emergency Room at Southeast Hospital in Cape Girardeau, and she was admitted for several days. It was at this point that I found several issues that made independent mobility very difficult for me. I am legally blind.

In the Emergency Room, I went to the restroom. I found the Braille signage was in error. One of the restrooms read a series of random letters and numbers, and the other said "Residents." Luckily, someone noticed that I was a little confused and sent me in the right direction.

Once Wendy was placed in a room, I needed to go to the gift shop to buy a phone

card and then go find something to eat. What I found was that the directional signage at the corners contained no Braille lettering or tactile letters. This meant I had to rely on passers by and my memory. It took a really long time to make the trek. Plus, the elevators did not have Braille on the buttons or floor markers outside the doors.

Once Wendy was released, I called Southeast and asked to speak to the Director's office. The Assistant was very nice and directed me to advertising, who in turn connected me to the right person. After I explained the issues to the man, he stated that he was appreciative of the input, because it was simply an oversight. The issue with the Emergency Room was just never mentioned, and he did not notice because he is not a Braille user.

About a week later, I received a letter telling me that he was working on correcting the accessibility issues. He had compared the restroom signs with the signs on other restrooms and found that I was right. He took the signs down and sent them back to the company. He also ordered the signs for the elevators, and was working on the directional signs.

In late January, when Wendy had Craigory, there was enough improvement to see that he really was working on it. It's so easy to find fault in failure to be accessible, but sometimes we should step back, stop fighting, and just ask.

-- Roger Crome, Vice-President
People First of Missouri

Small Business Disabled Access Tax Credit (IRS Code Section 44)

Small businesses earning a maximum of \$1 million or with 30 or fewer full-time employees may take an annual tax credit for making their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities. The credit is 50% of expenditures over \$250, with a maximum benefit of \$5,000. The credit cannot be used for new construction. It can be used for costs such as:

- Sign language interpreters for employees or customers who have hearing impairments
- Readers for employees or customers who have visual impairments
- Adaptive equipment or modification of equipment
- The production of print materials in alternate formats (i.e. Braille, audio tape, large print)
- The removal of architectural barriers in buildings or vehicles.

Architectural/Transportation Barrier Removal Tax Deduction (IRS Code Section 190)

All businesses are eligible to take a tax deduction of up to \$15,000 per year for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural, and transportation barriers for persons with disabilities at the workplace. Amounts in excess of that may be depreciated. Examples include the cost of providing accessible parking spaces, ramps and curb cuts, accessible water fountains, and restrooms and walkways for people using wheelchairs. It cannot be used for new construction or total remodeling projects. Small businesses may use both this deduction, and the Small Business Disabled Tax Credit.

For more information on both tax incentives, contact Mark Pitzer, Office of Chief Counsel, IRS, 1111 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20224. Phone: 202-622-3110.



Rate Your Favorite Restaurant for Accessibility

Wired on Wheels web site allows you to rate restaurants in your area for accessibility. You can also research possible destinations when going out for a night on the town, or when you are traveling. Visit them on line at www.wiredonwheels.org

RAC RAP

Well, we're coming up on my most favorite holidays of the year – Thanksgiving and Christmas. I hope you all have been as blessed as I have this past year.

Our Council continues to look for new members. Any person with a disability, or their relative, who may be interested in serving on the Council can contact me at 573-472-1711 for more information. We are continuing to work on our grant with Senate Bill 40 Boards. I would like to take this opportunity to thank New Madrid County, Ste. Genevieve County, and Perry County Senate Bill 40 Boards for their ongoing support.

We are also ready to begin work on a project with Boy/Girl Scout troops and 4-H groups. The project would assist any of these groups to earn their community service credit. Any group leader interested in learning more about this project can contact me at the number above.

Our next Region IX Council meeting will be held on Monday, November 24 at the Sikeston Regional Center beginning at 5:00 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

PARENT TO PARENT

Over and over again, I have heard families say they don't attend church or community events because they don't feel accepted, or they don't feel comfortable. My suggestion is to keep trying. Talk to others who attend, and get their suggestions and ideas about how things could work better for your family. If you have had a bad experience, don't give up. Try again. Try visiting a few different churches or community events until you find the right fit. Attend a few times before you decide whether it's right for your family. Volunteer to help in some way. Church and community are places where you and your family should feel accepted and supported. I believe many in the community are becoming more aware of the special needs that some families have and are making an effort to meet some of those needs. Remember, it's a learning process for your family and for your community.

- Cindy Brotherton,
Parent Policy Partner

Funding News for Higher Education

FastWEB is the largest online scholarship search available with 600,000 scholarships. Students get accurate updated information on scholarships, grants, and fellowships, suited to their goals and qualifications - all at no cost. Students should be advised that FastWEB does collect and sell student information (such as name, address, email, date of birth, gender, etc.) collected through their site. www.fastweb.com

Creating Options is a resource on financial aid for students with disabilities created by HEATH Resource Center at George Washington University, which is the National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities. The 19-page "Creating Options" document explains various types of government and private financial aid and where and how to apply for them. The last four pages list available disability-specific scholarships. It is worth checking out: www.heath.gwu.edu and click on "Publications." The site also includes articles about college life that are written by students, and a quarterly newsletter.

Pfizer Epilepsy Scholarship Since 1994, 16 scholarships of \$3,000 have been awarded annually to high school and college students who have:

- Overcome the challenges of epilepsy
- Been successful in school
- Done well in activities out of the classroom
- Shown the ability to make the most out of college or graduate school.



For information, call (800) AWARD-PF, visit the Pfizer Epilepsy Scholarship web site at www.epilepsy-scholarship.com, or write: Pfizer Epilepsy Scholarship Award, c/o the Eden Communications Group, 515 Valley St., Ste. 200, Maplewood, NJ 07040.

NFED: Each May the National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias awards \$10,000 in scholarships to individuals affected by ectodermal dysplasias for post secondary education (university, trade school, junior college, etc.) If you would like an application when they become available, email NFED at info@nfed.org, call 618-566-2020, or write National Office, P.O. Box 114, Mascoutah, IL 62258-0114



FREE BRAILLE BOOKS

Children in grades 2 and up can get a free Braille book every month and develop their own personal library! The titles are from the most popular children's series, and participants can enroll or withdraw from the program at any time. Blind youngsters, blind parents, friends and family members of blind children, blind adults, teachers of the blind, and schools and libraries serving the blind are eligible to participate in this program. To enroll, fill out the application

found at www.actionfund.org (click on "Free Braille Books Program") or request one by writing American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults, Free Braille Books Program, 1800 Johnson St., Baltimore, Maryland 21230, or call (410)659-9314, ext. 361.



SCHOOL ZONE

Collaboration Counts (from Parent Leadership Associates web site)

If you think that you are alone, and cannot do much to improve your school, you are probably right. But, if you collaborate with other parents and organizations, you can make a difference. There is strength and power in numbers. If you are in a school that is not parent-friendly, this is how you might be perceived:

1 parent = A fruitcake	10 parents = "We'd better listen"
2 parents = A fruitcake and a friend	25 parents = "Our dear friends"
3 parents = Troublemakers	50 parents = A powerful organization
5 parents = "Let's have a meeting"	

Check out the rest of the "12 things you should know about and expect from your schools...and yourself" from PLA at www.plassociates.org.

Resources for Families: This web site, the National Center for Low-Incidence Disabilities, contains Pop-up IEP responses; The Law for IEP Meetings, a self-paced tutorial to help parents prepare for IEP meetings; ADA/IDEA in Plain Language; a state agency database, and many more resources for the education scene. Visit www.nclid.unco.edu before your next IEP meeting!

From Emotions to Advocacy is the companion website to Wrightslaw and will teach you effective advocacy skills. You will learn to recognize pitfalls and avoid mistakes that prevent parents from successfully advocating for their children. Visit them at www.fetaweb.com. Ask your service coordinator about the Wrightslaw February 2004 Conference coming to Jefferson City...sponsored by MPACT!!

Toys and Books for Learning: Children of all ages can have fun while they're learning. Visit www.scholasticstore.com.

Health News



Health Information Online...

www.mlanet.org/resources/consumr_index.html Check out the Medical Library Associations top 10 most useful places for health information on the web,

Mail order prescriptions from Canada...

www.canadameds.com is Canada's largest mail order pharmacy providing American consumers with prescription drugs, both branded and generic. Visit the web site or call toll-free at 1-877-542-3330.

www.canadarx.com is a mail order pharmacy where seniors can save considerably off their prescription medications. No membership fee and no hidden costs. Visit the site or call toll-free at 1-866-262-2174.

JUST FOR KIDS

Fact Monster! This is an online almanac, atlas, dictionary and encyclopedia for kids. The site also includes a homework center, games and quizzes. www.factmonster.com

Operation Hope is a nonprofit investment banking organization that provides economic education for underserved populations. One of their programs is available to help children and teens learn about banking and money management, Banking on Our Future (BOOF) and is available online at www.bankingonourfuture.org.

CYKE! In the interactive world of CYKE, kids can play games and read online stories. Safe and private site. Mom and Dad, check out the CD ROM game, The Adventures with the E. Motion Express: Anger Stop. Kids can take a ride with the E. Motion Express train and help the Monkey King control his temper. CYKE devotes its time to the mental, physical and emotional development of children. www.cyke.com

Kid Zone! A place where kids can play and learn! www.idonline.org/kidzone

Freebies



Introduction to Sexuality Education for Individuals Who Are Deaf-Blind and Significantly Delayed is a free book you can order by calling 1-800-854-7103 (TTY) or 800-438-9376 (Voice) or by visiting www.tr.wou.edu/dblink. This is the web site of the National Information Clearinghouse on Children Who are Deaf-Blind and has a wealth of other information for caregivers and teachers.

A Guide for People with Disabilities Seeking Employment is available by calling 1-800-772-1213.

Missouri Disability Network Newsletter is a collaborative effort of Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, Protection and Advocacy Services and UMKC Institute for Human Development. They have pooled their resources to provide educational information to consumers and professionals through this free quarterly newsletter, available in two formats. To receive it by e-mail, contact ddpartners@moadvocacy.org. To receive it by mail, call 800-500-7878 or 800-444-0821.

Visit Sikeston Regional Center's Website at: <http://www.dmh.missouri.gov/sikeston/index.htm>

Information on alternative treatments, resources, and products is provided in this newsletter as a service to families, and does not reflect the endorsement of the Sikeston Regional Center or the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Families should always consult with their doctors and therapists before trying any new product or treatment.

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